



**Virginia Graduation
Requirements
2007
and Beyond**

A Message from the Superintendent of Public Instruction

The Virginia Department of Education has prepared this brochure to help you understand the commonwealth's graduation requirements and the many options now available to students for earning a high school diploma. This brochure also provides information on how you can get even more out of your high school experience by accepting the challenge of advanced courses.



I encourage you to read this brochure carefully and keep it handy for future reference. Your school counselor can answer any questions you and your parents might have about Virginia's diploma requirements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas

Most Virginia students earn either a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma. Both of these diplomas require students to pass required and elective courses and verify their achievement by passing Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in English, mathematics, and other subject areas. A verified unit of credit is awarded for a course in which the student earns a standard unit of credit and achieves a passing score on a corresponding end-of-course SOL test or a substitute assessment approved by the Board of Education.

Students also must meet any additional requirements established by their local school board. Your school counselor can tell you more about local requirements for graduation.

Standard Diploma

To graduate with a Standard Diploma, students must earn at least 22 standard units of credit by passing required courses and electives, and earn at least six verified credits by passing end-of-course SOL tests or other assessments approved by the Board of Education. The table below displays the minimum course and credit requirements for a Standard Diploma.

Subject Area	Standard Units of Credit	Verified Units of Credit
English	4	2
Mathematics	3	1
Science	3	1
History and Social Science	3	1
Health and Physical Education	2	
Fine or Practical Arts	1	
Electives	6	
Student Selected Tests		1
Total	22	6

*Please note:
Your school counselor can tell you which courses are offered by your school to fulfill the requirements for a Standard Diploma.*

Verified Units of Credit and the Standard Diploma

Students seeking a Standard Diploma must earn six verified units of credit, including two verified credits in English, and at least one verified credit each in mathematics, science, history/social science, and in a student-selected content area.

Most students will earn these required verified units of credit by passing end-of-course SOL tests. Students also may earn verified units of credit in English, mathematics, history/social science, and science by passing substitute tests of equal or greater rigor approved by the Board of Education, such as Advanced Placement (AP) tests. Your school counselor can provide more information about substitute tests.

Career and technical education students may earn **student-selected*** verified credits by passing examinations for industry certification or licensure. Career and technical students who complete a program sequence and earn two student-selected verified credits by passing a recognized certification or licensure examination may **substitute**** one of these credits for a verified unit of credit in either science or history/social science. Here are some examples of how students can earn the six verified credits required for a Standard Diploma.

Example 2.

Verified Credits	Subject and Test
1	English: Reading
1	English: Writing
1	Algebra I
1	Virginia and U.S. History
1	Earth Science
1	Career & Technical Ed.*
6	Total Verified Credits

Example 1.

Verified Credits	Subject and Test
1	English: Reading
1	English: Writing
1	Algebra I
1	AP U.S. History
1	Biology
1	World History I *
6	Total Verified Credits

Example 3.

Verified Credits	Subject and Test
1	English: Reading
1	English: Writing
1	Geometry
1	World Geography
1	Career or Technical Ed. Sequence and Certification
1	Career & Technical Ed. ** Sequence and Certification
6	Total Verified Credits

Locally Awarded Verified Units of Credit

Students who fail a retake of a history/social studies or science test, but achieve a scaled score of 375 or better, may be awarded a verified credit by their local school board, following a review of their class work and/or a demonstration of their proficiency in the content of the course. Because these are locally awarded verified credits, requirements may vary from school division to school division. Ask your school counselor for more information about locally awarded verified credits.

Transfer Students

See the “Frequently Asked Questions” section on the reverse of this brochure for information on diploma requirements for transfer students.

Advanced Studies Diploma

To earn an Advanced Studies Diploma, students must earn at least 24 standard units of credit and at least nine verified units of credit. The table below displays the course and credit requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma.

Subject Area	Standard Units of Credit	Verified Units of Credit
English	4	2
Mathematics	4	2
Science	4	2
History and Social Science	4	2
Foreign Language	3	
Health and Physical Education	2	
Fine Arts or Career & Tech. Ed.	1	
Electives	2	
Student Selected Tests		1
Total	24	9

*Please note:
Your school counselor can tell you which courses are offered by your school to fulfill the requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma.*

Students may fulfill the foreign language requirement by earning either three standard credits in a single language or by earning two standard credits in each of two languages. (If an Advanced Studies student earns two credits in each of two languages, he or she would need to earn only one credit in an elective course.)

Verified Units of Credit and the Advanced Studies Diploma

Students seeking an Advanced Studies Diploma must earn a total of at least nine verified units of credit, including two in English (reading and writing), two in mathematics, two in science, two in history/social science, and one in a student-selected content area.

Most students seeking an Advanced Studies Diploma will earn these required verified units of credit by passing end-of-course SOL tests in English reading and writing, mathematics, science, and history/social science.

Students also may earn verified credits in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science toward an Advanced Studies Diploma by passing Board of Education-approved substitute tests of equal or greater rigor, just as with the Standard Diploma. Locally awarded verified units of credit, however, are not applicable to the Advanced Studies Diploma.

Frequently Asked Questions

How many verified credits do students who transfer into Virginia high schools from other states or private schools need to earn a Standard Diploma?

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the tenth grade or at the beginning of the eleventh grade must earn a minimum of four verified units of credit, including one each in English, mathematics, history/social science, and science to receive a Standard Diploma. These students are eligible for locally awarded verified credits in science and history/social science and are also eligible for verified credits earned through career and technical education.

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade must earn a minimum of two verified credits, including one in English and one in a subject of their own choosing to receive a Standard Diploma.

How many verified credits do students who transfer into Virginia high schools from other states or private schools need to earn an Advanced Studies Diploma?

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the tenth grade or at the beginning of the eleventh grade must earn a minimum of six verified credits, including two in English, one each in mathematics, history/social science, and science, and one in a subject of their own choosing to receive an Advanced Studies Diploma.

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade must earn a minimum of four verified units of credit, including one in English and three in subjects of their own choosing to receive an Advanced Studies Diploma.

What about students who transfer to a Virginia public high school during their senior year?

Students transferring after 20 instructional hours per course of their senior year shall be given every opportunity to earn a Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma. If it is not possible for the student to meet the requirements for a Virginia Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma, arrangements should be made for the student's previous school to award the diploma. If these arrangements cannot be made, a waiver of the verified unit of credit requirements may be available to the student. Your school counselor can tell you more about how to apply for a waiver.

May end-of-course assessments taken in other states be substituted for SOL tests in the awarding of verified credits?

Tests in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science that are administered as part of another state's accountability program may be substituted for the awarding of verified credit. Such tests are held to the same standard of review and approval by the Board of Education as other substitute tests.

What are “standard units of credit” and “verified units of credit”?

A standard unit of credit is awarded for a course in which the student successfully completes the objectives of the course and the equivalent of 140 clock hours of instruction.

A verified unit of credit is awarded for a course in which the student earns a standard unit of credit and achieves a passing score on a corresponding end-of-course SOL test or a substitute assessment approved by the Board of Education.

Are students who fail end-of-course tests permitted to retake the tests?

Students may retake end-of-course tests as often as a school division’s testing schedule permits. Students who score within 25 points of passing or have extenuating circumstances may be eligible to retake a test before the next scheduled administration.

What happens if a student passes a course but fails the corresponding end-of-course test?

As mentioned above, students may retake tests needed to earn verified units of credit for graduation. Students who score between 375-399 on a test are eligible for an expedited retake and may retake a test before the next scheduled test administration.

Students who after remediation fail a retake of history/social studies or science test, but achieve a score of 375 or better, may be awarded a verified credit by their local school board, following a review of their class work and/or demonstration of their mastery of the content of the course. Verified credits awarded in this manner are given at the discretion of local school boards and apply only toward a Standard Diploma. Ask your school counselor for more information about locally awarded verified credits.

May tests of equal or greater rigor be substituted for SOL tests for the awarding of verified credits?

Yes. The Board of Education has approved a number of tests that students may take to earn verified credits toward graduation. The Board also has approved a schedule of career and technical examinations for licensure or certification that may be substituted for SOL tests to earn student-selected verified units of credit. Tests for licensure or certification that require the demonstration of knowledge and skills beyond what is associated with a single course may result in the awarding of two units of verified credit. Your school counselor and career and technical education teacher can provide more information about these examinations.

**YOUR high school diploma is
YOUR TICKET
to the rest of your life!**



Want to Maximize Your Senior Year?

To get the most out of your high school experience, while reducing the cost of college tuition and technical training, consider these three options:

Early College Scholars

The Early College Scholars program allows eligible high school seniors to complete the requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma while earning at least 15 hours of potentially transferable credits toward a college degree. Students earn these credits through dual-enrollment programs and by taking AP or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses at their home high schools or through the Virginia Virtual AP School.

Commonwealth Scholars and Academic Competitiveness Grants

Students who exceed the minimum requirements for a Standard Diploma by completing the Commonwealth Scholars program or another approved advanced course of study may qualify for federal Academic Competitiveness Grants and other incentives for students to take more challenging courses. Your school counselor can provide more information about these opportunities.

Path to Industry Certification

The Path to Industry Certification program encourages students to earn an industry certification while still in high school. Often, this technical preparation will continue after graduation from high school.

Talk with your school counselor for more information or to see if you are eligible for these programs.

More information on Virginia's graduation requirements is available on the Virginia Department of Education Web site at

www.doe.virginia.gov

